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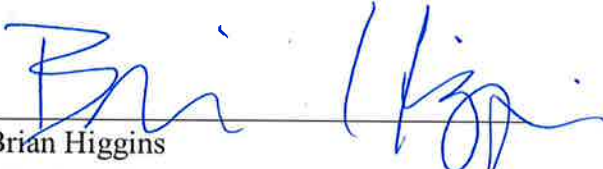
November 18, 2019

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Neal-

Please find below my statement for the record for the hearing "Caring for Aging Americans" held by the Ways and Means Committee on November 14, 2019.

Sincerely,


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

"Ensuring that our seniors and individuals with disabilities receive the care they need and the compassion they deserve is our moral duty. Every person, regardless of their health status or income level, should be able to access high-quality care and live out their lives with dignity and respect.

Medicare is one of the great American success stories, providing health insurance to millions of American seniors and protecting them from falling into poverty due to high health care costs. But while Medicare is an amazing and often life-saving program, we know that it can still be improved.

The fact that Medicare does not cover long-term care is a gap in the program's design. Families and caregivers face a difficult task when their loved ones need long-term care. As the testimony we have heard during this hearing shows, too many patients receive low-quality services, including neglect and outright abuse by providers and facilities that are charged with their care. The consequences can be horrific, even deadly.

Individuals with Alzheimer's disease are especially vulnerable. In 2014, fifty percent of all nursing home residents had Alzheimer's disease or a related form of dementia, and two-thirds of all Americans living with dementia will die while in a nursing home.

Studies and data show that seniors with Alzheimer's in nursing home facilities are too often given antipsychotic drugs when such drugs are not indicated. Studies also show that seniors with Alzheimer's who are given antipsychotic medications end up spending more days hospitalized than those who are not prescribed such drugs.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.8 million Americans currently live with Alzheimer's. By 2050, that number is projected to reach 14 million. The time and resources dedicated to caring for these individuals will have to grow exponentially, but too many facilities already do not provide proper care to those living with Alzheimer's and do not do enough to guarantee their safety and protect their dignity.

In my own district, I have previously pushed for greater oversight of facilities that were found to be repeat violators of minimum safety standards. We must do more to ensure our seniors are being properly cared for."